



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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BASIC REGULATIONS ISSUED FOR HUNTING OF RAILS, GALLINULES,
WOODCOCK, DOVES, AND BAND-TAILED PIGEONS

Except for a slight liberalization in length of the season for mourning doves, the basic hunting regulations for rails, gallinules, woodcock, mourning and white-winged doves will remain about the same in the 1956-57 season as last year, Secretary of the Interior Fred A. Seaton announced today.

Exclusive of woodcock, this portion of the annual revision of the hunting regulations, as prepared by the Fish and Wildlife Service, sets forth the "outside" dates for hunting these species of September 1, 1956, through January 10, 1957, the same as last year. Within this framework, the various State game departments may select their own seasons for hunting these birds. The specific dates will be published later after the States have notified the Service of their selections.

Although the regulation proposals released today contain those for the shooting of waterfowl, coots, and Wilson's snipe in Alaska where the season begins on September 1, Secretary Seaton stated that the detailed regulations for the hunting of migratory waterfowl and coots in the United States will not be issued until late in August.

The basic regulations by species are as follows:

Rails and Gallinules--This year open seasons on rails and gallinules are to be prescribed only for the Atlantic, Mississippi, and Central Flyways. Because of the lack of hunter interest in rails in the Pacific Flyway, no season has been set on this species for that region.

The game departments of the States in the Atlantic, Mississippi, and Central Flyways may select a season of 70 consecutive days within the September 1 to January 10 framework. This is an increase of 10 days in the length of the season over last year.

In the Atlantic Flyway, limits of 10 daily and 20 in possession (the same as last year) will prevail for rails (except sora) and gallinules. For the States in the Mississippi and Central Flyways, the same bag and possession limit of 15 on rails (except sora) and gallinules will be in effect.

All three flyways will again have a limit of 25 sora daily and in possession.

According to reports received by the Service, gallinules are sometimes taken inadvertently while coots are being hunted in the Pacific Flyway. Although no season for gallinules is being recommended at this time, consideration will be given by the Service, when the waterfowl and coot seasons are prescribed, to allowing gallinules to be taken with coots in the Pacific Flyway in order to avoid the technical violations that now occur.

Woodcock--As last year, a season of 40 consecutive days, with a daily bag of four and possession limit of eight, will be in effect for woodcock. The "outside" dates of October 1, through January 20, will also remain the same as last year.

In continued recognition of the desires of Michigan and New York to select woodcock hunting dates which will run concurrently, as far as possible, with their seasons on grouse, these States may again select woodcock seasons based on zones established under State law to govern their grouse seasons.

Since woodcock normally are not found in the Pacific Flyway States, no season on these birds has been set in that area.

Mourning Doves--A recently completed dove survey indicates that the 1956 dove breeding population is equal to that of 1955, and possibly is somewhat larger in all regions of the country except the West. Since a lengthening of the season last year did not result in an over-harvest of mourning doves, the Service has recommended a further slight liberalization in the length of the season for 1956.

The framework for this species, however, will remain the same as last year, extending from September 1, through January 10. Within this period, all States east of the Mississippi River (and including Arkansas and Louisiana) may submit recommendations for hunting seasons on mourning doves consisting of one of the following alternatives:

- (1) 40 consecutive full days
- (2) 2 split-seasons aggregating 40 full days
- (3) 55 consecutive half-days, or
- (4) 2 split-seasons aggregating 55 half-days

This represents a lengthening of the mourning dove season in the eastern group of States by five full days, if the first or second alternative is chosen, or 10 half-days if either of the latter two alternatives is selected. The daily bag and possession limit remains at eight.

For all States west of the Mississippi River (exclusive of Arkansas and Louisiana), last year's bag and possession limit of 10 mourning doves remains in effect. Since the western group of States (other than Texas) seemingly does not

favor half-day mourning dove hunting, an increase in season length from 45 to 50 full days has been allowed. The season of 50 full days may be split by the States in the western group if desired.

Because of the vastness of Texas, that State will again be permitted to have mourning dove seasons applicable to two dove zones on the same basis as last year. This is subject to the condition, however, that zoning for the Texas dove season will be permitted only if half-day shooting is chosen. An increase in season length of five half-days has been allowed, the additional five half-days to be applied to either zone or divided between the two dove zones in the proportions recommended by the Texas Game and Fish Commission.

If seasons for mourning doves involving "half-days" are selected by one or more States, these half-days will begin at noon and end at sunset. "Full days" refer to a period beginning one-half hour before sunrise and ending at sunset. If a split season is selected by any State, the two hunting periods need not be of equal length.

White-winged Doves, in Arizona and California--A white-winged dove season will be prescribed for Arizona and for Imperial, Riverside, and San Bernardino Counties in California which will conform to the mourning dove seasons recommended by the Game and Fish Departments of these States.

In California, as last year, the bag and possession limit for white-winged and mourning doves will remain at 10, singly or in the aggregate of both kinds.

In Arizona the bag and possession limit on white-winged and mourning doves will remain the same as last year--a limit of 15 of these species, provided such limit does not contain more than 10 mourning doves.

These seasons on white-winged doves will follow those prescribed last year except that San Bernardino County will be added for the first time to the California counties. This addition has been made in recognition of the fact that doves are now found in San Bernardino County in sufficient numbers to warrant an open season.

Band-tailed pigeons--The 1955 regulations which permitted the taking of this species in two zones in California, and in Oregon and Washington will remain in effect unless the interested States recommend an adjustment of hunting dates. Different hunting dates, not to exceed a season of 31 days, may be recommended by these States within the framework of September 1, through January 10. The daily bag and possession limit will remain at six.

Scoter, elder and old-squaw ducks--The same regulations as 1955 will be in effect.

Waterfowl, coots, and Wilson's snipe in Alaska--The 1955 regulations prescribing seasons on these species in Alaska, beginning on September 1, will remain unchanged.

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